

# FARMERS FIRST

**FRAM**  
**FARMERS**  
GREAT BRITISH FARMERS CO-OPERATING

Issue 60 | Summer 2021



PAGES 6-7

**NEW PARLOUR  
A GAME CHANGER  
FOR FRAM MEMBER**



PAGE 9

**LAUNCH OF WHEAT  
BUYBACK CONTRACTS**



PAGE 15

**EXPERT ADVICE ON  
ANIMAL MEDICINES**



*Suffolk fresh produce farm welcomes UK's first robotic tractor. More on page 5.*



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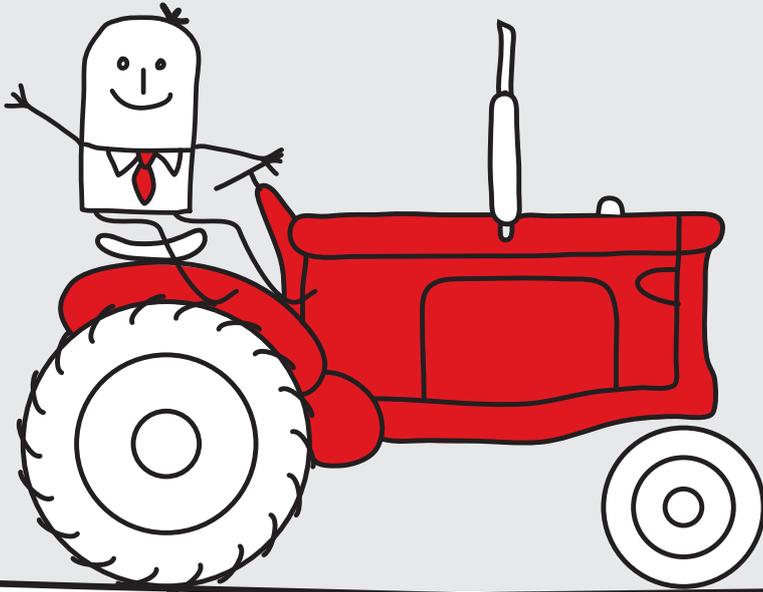
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# A BRIGHTER OUTLOOK, JUST IN TIME FOR HARVEST!

As the weather has taken a turn for the better, and life is opening up again, there's no doubt that things are feeling a little brighter and more positive. The Fram staff are back in the office, and we're excited at the opportunity to get out and about at our upcoming Member Days.

With a number of industry events in the diary, including some of our own, we were lucky to have a taste of face-to-face communication when we hosted a press event in late April with the kind permission and support of Home Farm in Nacton. The business purchased a Robotti 150D with the help and guidance of our Machinery Manager Gordon Cummings. It is the first robotic tractor to be in operation in the UK, and we are delighted to have been involved – more on page 5.

Since joining Fram Farmers last year, I am yet to meet many of our members in person, so the Member Days that we have planned throughout June and July will be a true highlight of my diary for this year (see page 4 for details).

“I welcome you to tap me on the shoulder and share your views and experiences on what you would like Fram to do for you.”

I'm looking forward to the chatting to members about the real challenges of farming today, and how Fram Farmers can bring value to their farming businesses.

As we edge closer to harvest, we're bringing you updates from independent agronomists Graham Brooks and John Hood, our new Development Manager in the Northwest (page 10). Fram member Ryan Gue also provides us with an update on his YEN wheat trials in West Sussex (page 11).

In this issue, we're pleased to update you with a number of developments at Fram Farmers HQ, including staff changes (page 4), a closer look at IT and the role it plays in modern businesses (page 17), new features of the Fram Farmers Fuel Card (page 13), and the launch of Fram's buyback contracts (page 9).

A crucial element of any rural business, we've taken a closer look at farm insurance, with an insightful Q&A from our partners and industry experts Scrutton Bland. Ed Nottingham tells us more on page 19.

Our member profile in this issue takes us to a dairy farm on the Norfolk/Suffolk border, where the family partnership



Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO

has revolutionised its business with a new farm building and the installation of a new parlour, with the help of our Building Materials team. See pages 6 and 7.

Fram's Livestock team is key for many of our members, sourcing equipment, feed, and animal medicines. Jessica Frost, our fully qualified Registered Animal Medicines Advisor, explains how her expertise and the team's supplier relationships can help members to save money on animal health inputs. See page 15.

I very much look forward to meeting as many members as possible at the Member Days over the next few weeks. I welcome you to tap me on the shoulder and share your views and experiences on what you would like Fram to do for you, or feel free to just have a moan about the weather!

## FRAM FARMERS GREAT BRITISH FARMERS CO-OPERATING

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Every precaution has been taken to ensure that the material published in Farmers First is accurate at the time of printing. For further details about anything featured in this edition please call Fram Farmers on 01728 727700, or Juliette Tompkins at Kendalls PR and Marketing on 01502 475110. If you would like to opt out of receiving Farmers First, please email mail@framfarmers.co.uk

### CONTENTS:

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| News.....                     | 4-5 |
| Building Materials.....       | 6-7 |
| Autumn Buyback Contracts..... | 8   |
| Arable Round Up.....          | 10  |
| YEN Wheat Trials Update.....  | 11  |
| Fuel Card Scheme Update.....  | 13  |
| Livestock Team Update.....    | 15  |
| IT Systems Update.....        | 17  |
| Farm Insurance.....           | 19  |



## MEMBER DAYS

After a particularly long hiatus from physical events, we are looking forward to hosting Fram Farmers Member Days across the country this summer.

We have four events planned, at a number of locations, which will provide the opportunity to meet Andrew Knowles, our new CEO, as well as the wider Fram Farmers team. Members can also speak with fellow members, and discover the latest developments from a number of local and national suppliers.

Each day will be slightly different, details of which are outlined below, and three events will also host Women of Fram sessions for anyone interested in joining this network, to meet in person, and discuss ideas for how Women of Fram can develop in the future.

Members may bring guests along to the events, and we ask that you register interest and attendance via the Fram Farmers office: 01728 727700 | info@framfarmers.co.uk

*Please Note: Due to Covid restrictions, these events are subject to change. We will update members on any potential changes at the earliest opportunity.*

### Wednesday 23rd June

#### Church Farm, Polegate, Sussex

**On the Day:** Brewery tour, see suppliers, and meet the Fram team

**Women in Fram:** Fram Farmers' Vice Chairman Wendy Houston will be joined by guest speaker Honor Eldridge, Environmental Specialist at Wilson Wraight.

### Tuesday 29th & Wednesday 30th June

#### Mowness Hall, Stonham Aspell, Suffolk

Members Trial Event in association with BASF & Walnes Seeds

**On the Day:** Pre-booked tour of trials plots only

### Wednesday 7th July

#### RAGT, Icklestone, West Cambridge

**On the Day:** See trial plots and suppliers, and meet the Fram team

**Women in Fram:** Fram Farmers' Vice Chairman Wendy Houston will be joined by guest speaker Honor Eldridge, Environmental Specialist at Wilson Wraight.

### Wednesday 14th July

#### Grosvenor Farms, Chester, Cheshire

**On the Day:** Dairy tour of Grosvenor Farm, see suppliers, and meet the Fram team

**Women in Fram:** Fram Farmers' Vice Chairman Wendy Houston will be joined by Olivia MacGarvie, Trainee Rural Business Advisor at SRH Agribusiness, discussing the transition into ELMS.

## STAFF UPDATES

The past few months have seen a number of changes to staffing at Fram Farmers, with some hellos, some farewells, and a new role to support our members in the North of the country.

Catherine Coe, Arable Specialist, has left the cooperative after two and a half years. Catherine will be joining Cofco as Fertiliser Specialist, and we wish her all the best in her new role.

We have a new addition to the Crops team in Nigel Day. Nigel joined Fram Farmers in March, bringing with him 25 years' experience in the industry, across a variety of roles, most recently in the seed industry, as well as a period in crop protection. As Crops Specialist, Nigel will cover seed, fertiliser, crop protection and grain, and looks forward to meeting and assisting members with all crop requirements.



Nigel Day

After five years with Fram Farmers, Laura Buckingham, Crop Protection and Strategic Partnership Manager, will be leaving Fram in June. Laura is expecting her second child, and while we're sad to see her go, we thank Laura for all she has achieved on behalf of the membership, and wish her every success in the future. We will shortly be announcing Laura's replacement.

Amanda Owen will also soon be leaving the Crops team to join Premier Seeds, and Rachel Cooper will be stepping into Amanda's shoes, taking over as Seed Product Manager in July.

Toby Hainsworth-Breare has completed his student placement, having been at Fram Farmers for a year as part of his degree from Harper Adams University. Toby worked across various departments during his time at Fram, and we wish him the best for his final year of studies. We will have a new placement student, Francesca Aitchison, joining us in August.

We are also delighted to tell members that we have a new Northwest Member Development Manager joining us; independent agronomist John Hood has joined Fram to support and develop membership throughout the Northwest and North Wales. We're pleased to welcome him on board.

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# ROBOTTI

## UK'S FIRST COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE ROBOTIC TRACTOR IN OPERATION ON SUFFOLK FARM

Fram Farmers is delighted to have been involved in an exciting and significant investment for Fram Farmers member Home Farm Nacton in Suffolk.

You may have seen and heard in the press recently that the organic fresh produce farm has taken delivery of a Robotti 150D from Danish manufacturer Agriointelli, which is the first robotic tractor to be fully operational on a farm in the UK.

Producing both organic and conventional vegetables, including leeks, brassicas, onions, red beet, potatoes, fodder beet, sugar beet and cereals, across 1940ha, Home Farm was looking for ways to adopt more advanced technology into the business, and the Robotti 150D ticked all the boxes.

Andrew Williams, Farm Director at Home Farm, heard about Robotti through Gordon Cummings, Fram's Machinery Manager who had been looking into the use of robotics in the fresh produce sector for over two years. Gordon put Andrew in touch with the team at Agriointelli, the Denmark-based company behind Robotti.

The Robotti 150D has now been in operation on the farm since mid-April, weeding a number of vegetable crops using a harrow attachment. Home Farm



Nacton also plans to use it for topping and drilling in the future. According to Agriointelli, this is one of 50 robots which will be working in Europe by the end of the year.

The model at Home Farm, the Robotti 150D, has two Kubota 75 HP Diesel or bio-fuel engines, and is autonomously controlled by GPS via an onboard computer, not depending on a human driver, instead following a pre-programmed planned route in the field.

The left engine propels the machine and powers the conventional three-point hitch, meaning it can be fitted with standard implements and perform multiple tasks in the field throughout the season. The right engine drives the PTO. Each engine takes 110 litres of fuel, which is enough for the machine to run continuously for approximately 24 hours.

While Home Farm Nacton is largely light land, development trials in Denmark show that the Robotti also works well on heavier land, and is especially effective with bed systems and row crops, as it carries the implement in the centre, evenly distributing the weight on all four wheels.

Interest in autonomous tractors has been around for a while, and Fram Farmers is delighted to have been involved in bringing this to the UK for Andrew and the team at Home Farm Nacton. This supplier relationship is now available to all Fram Farmer members, and members will be able to see Robotti in operation at the Member Days on 23 June, 7 July and 14 July. Members of the Robotti team will also be in attendance to discuss this exciting new technology.

Fram Farmers extends a huge thank you to Agriointelli, and to Andrew Williams and the team at Home Farm Nacton for hosting press visitors in April.



At the end of April, Fram Farmers held a press launch event at Home Farm Nacton, inviting farm machinery reporters to see Robotti in action. The event attracted press from a wide number of regional and specialist trade publications, as well as BBC Radio Suffolk and BBC Look East.

# NEW PARLOUR IS A GAME CHANGER FOR FRAM MEMBER

A total eight hour-a-day milking shift was putting time pressure on second generation farmers David and Shaun Utting, so they came to the conclusion that they either needed to get out of cows completely, or invest in a new parlour.

The brothers decided that the previous parlour, installed in 1985 and only able to milk twenty four cows at a time, needed to be replaced.

Milking 300 cows, with plans to increase up to 350, supplying milk to Arla on a 360 contract, the team on farm had been spending four hours milking in the morning, and a further four hours in the afternoon each day, due to the limited facilities in the old parlour.

Farming 1000 acres, half owned, and half rented, the brothers graze 650 acres, with the other 350 dedicated to an arable operation growing wheat, barley, maize and short-ley grass. They also finish 200 beef cattle per year, have a contracting business, provide forager and digger hire and run an agricultural supply business, so effective time management is a must. Once the decision was made, David and Shaun's first call was to the Fram Farmers Building Materials team, as they looked to source the materials for a building to house the new parlour.

David and Shaun have been Fram Farmers members since 2005, following the passing of their father, who had started the business in 1949, as they decided they wanted to simplify their buying processes when it came to farm inputs. "There was a lot of paperwork and office-based tasks to deal with, which was all new to us. Fram Farmers provided this solution, with one simple bill at the end of each month," says David.

The farm now buys all feed through the cooperative, including molasses and



minerals, seed, including grass seed, ag chem, diesel, fertiliser, string, net wrap, and electricity, as well as general building materials.

The project started at the beginning of 2020, with all of the steel sourced from Fram Farmers, as well as some concrete, mesh and K-form. The brothers also turned to Fram Farmers for plastic sealing, windows, doors and drainage. The parlour was sourced separately from Fullwood, and installed by Mill Dairy Service in Norfolk.

The new building, a steel framed shed, houses the parlour in the centre, with calving bays and a handling system, as well as a farm office, chemical store, engine room, dairy, and bulk tank room.

"Fram Farmers were great in relation to sourcing materials for us. Generally, things were delivered on time, despite the interruptions of Covid-19. There were no severe delays, only a few issues here and there, but it was well-managed by Nick and Gemma in the Building Materials team," adds David.

"There were a few occasions where we had overlooked specific materials or items, and their knowledge and expertise meant they knew where to source items from, and were able to do so, and have them delivered, at short notice," he says. The brothers also found using Fram Farmers provided a helpful measure when speaking to other suppliers direct. "It meant we knew if anyone was lifting our





leg, working as a trustworthy benchmark, with competitive prices. Fram Farmers are specifically good for larger quantity orders,” says David.

There are just a few snagging jobs to be done, and some additional concrete to be laid, with further plans to install a rainwater harvester, but the new parlour is up and running, and already making a huge difference.

“We believe it was the largest parlour of this type to be installed in the UK at the time, and the team at Mill Dairy Service were fantastic,” says David. “The Fullwood Packo CR90 32/64 swingover model is rapid exit so it really speeds things up, with staff now able to start milking at 5.30am, and the process only taking an hour and a half. The team used to start milking at 3.30am, then stop for breakfast, work for another hour, then have the middle of the day off before milking in the afternoon. Now, more time is freed up to concentrate on other tasks on farm and other activities, including sitting in on meetings with the feed adviser.”

Staff are also able to join webinars run by AHDB, or other industry organisations, that often take place in the middle of the day or afternoon. Milking time is no longer taking over, so all staff are more involved in the business and the decision making, learning more, and getting more from their role.

“It has given us a life back while allowing us the opportunity to stay in cows, and it has given everyone the incentive to stay doing what they love,” says David.

“We have recently recruited a new member of staff, and from our point of view, it was a much more appealing job to advertise, working with a new parlour, with a more involved role in the overall running of the farm. It is also a better working environment, especially with the new offices and staff room. All the facilities have been given a revamp,” he concludes.



# WRITTEN IN THE STARS



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# FRAM FARMERS LAUNCHES WHEAT BUYBACK CONTRACTS

Building on a service already partly offered to members, Fram Farmers is pleased to launch a number of buyback contracts. We talk to Jono Woollatt, Farm Trader, about this new offering on a number of wheat groups and varieties.

With the recent merger of the Arable Inputs and Grain Marketing teams, the newly formed Crops team at Fram Farmers purchases seed on behalf of members. The new team is now working to offer a new opportunity for members. Shared knowledge from seed breeders, as well as insight into grain markets, has created unique contract opportunities; aligning the two existing services now provides the membership with a more streamlined route to market.

Discussing the new service, Jono Woollatt explains, "As a team, we are finding that we are sharing much more information between ourselves than before, which puts us in a better position to pass information and advice on to members."

"There is a natural cross-over, with some members buying their seed and others marketing their crops through us, but many members were not taking advantage of combining both services, and the benefits that this can bring."

## INSIGHT AT BOTH ENDS OF THE MARKET

"As a department, we have those insights into the varieties that prove popular with agronomists, farmers, and buyers of grain. This should be the focus for growers, given the unpredictable weather conditions we seem to be facing in recent years," adds Jono.

"We have long established relationships with seed breeders, who are continually developing their varieties and taking advice from growers across the country. Varieties available in the marketing contracts are based on this insight, suiting all members, taking into consideration their soil type and their geographical location.

"For example, highly vigorous, early developing varieties such as LG Skyscraper have encouraged positive feedback, we are therefore ensuring that these are covered in the buyback contracts. For our members in the Midlands growing milling wheats, G1 contracts are much more appropriate due to their proximity to the flour mills. Because of our close links with the Midlands Mills we also have the advantage of additional insight for the end use."

## CONTRACTS AVAILABLE

The Fram Farmers buyback contracts currently cover wheats - G4 hard and soft wheats, G3 soft wheats and G1 and G2 milling wheats. All seed varieties on the recommended list are available to purchase through the Fram Farmers Crops team:

### Group 4 Hards

Grown for yield, the barn fillers of the recommended list are boasting impressive disease resistance scores.

| Fungicide-treated grain yield | Group 4 Hards |        |     |      |     |     |     |        |      |     |      |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|--------|------|-----|------|
|                               | UK            | UK NEW | UK  | UK C | UK  | E&W | UK  | Sp NEW | UK + | UK  | W    |
| United Kingdom (10.8) t/ha    | 104           | 104    | 103 | 103  | 103 | 102 | 102 | 102    | 101  | 99  | 99   |
| East region (10.7) t/ha       | 104           | 104    | 103 | 103  | 103 | 102 | 101 | 101    | 101  | 99  | 99   |
| West region (10.9) t/ha       | 104           | 104    | 105 | 103  | 103 | 102 | 105 | 102    | 101  | 100 | 102  |
| North region (11.0) t/ha      | 105           | (102)  | 100 | 102  | 101 | 102 | 101 | (103)  | 102  | 99  | (90) |

### Group 4 Softs

Also at the high end of the yield spectrum of the recommended list, the strong agronomic packages of G4 soft wheats have excelled in recent years where extreme weather conditions have prevailed.

| Fungicide-treated grain yield | Group 4 Softs |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |     |     |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                               | UK            | UK  | UK  | UK  | UK    | UK  | UK  | UK  | UK  | UK  |
| United Kingdom (10.8) t/ha    | 105           | 104 | 103 | 101 | 100   | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| East region (10.7) t/ha       | 105           | 104 | 102 | 101 | 100   | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| West region (10.9) t/ha       | 104           | 104 | 104 | 101 | 100   | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| North region (11.0) t/ha      | 105           | 102 | 101 | 101 | (102) | 101 | 99  | 101 | 99  | 99  |

### Group 3 Softs

With the potential for extra premium, G3 soft wheats have great gross margin potential with great all round agronomic packages available for certain varieties.

| Fungicide-treated grain yield | Group 3 Softs |        |       |     |       |      |     |     |     |     |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|-----|-------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                               | UK            | UK NEW | UK    | UK  | UK    | UK   | UK  | UK  | UK  | UK  |
| United Kingdom (10.8) t/ha    | 103           | 102    | 102   | 101 | 101   | 101  | 100 | 99  | 99  | 99  |
| East region (10.7) t/ha       | 104           | 102    | 102   | 102 | 103   | 102  | 100 | 99  | 99  | 99  |
| West region (10.9) t/ha       | 102           | 101    | 101   | 101 | 99    | 100  | 100 | 99  | 99  | 99  |
| North region (11.0) t/ha      | (100)         | (102)  | (101) | 98  | (100) | (98) | 103 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

### Group 1 Milling Wheats

| Fungicide-treated grain yield | Group 1 Milling Wheats |      |    |    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------|----|----|
|                               | UK                     | UK C | UK | UK |
| United Kingdom (10.8) t/ha    | 98                     | 97   | 96 | 96 |
| East region (10.7) t/ha       | 98                     | 97   | 96 | 95 |
| West region (10.9) t/ha       | 99                     | 97   | 97 | 97 |
| North region (11.0) t/ha      | 97                     | 96   | 93 | 94 |

### Group 1 Milling Wheats

As the yields of modern milling varieties remain relatively high, greater attention to nitrogen inputs is required than 'older' varieties to achieve the necessary protein quality and gain maximum return.

### Group 2 Milling Wheats

| Fungicide-treated grain yield | Group 2 Milling Wheats |      |      |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------|------|
|                               | UK                     | UK C | UK + |
| United Kingdom (10.8) t/ha    | 100                    | 100  | 99   |
| East region (10.7) t/ha       | 100                    | 100  | 99   |
| West region (10.9) t/ha       | 101                    | 100  | 99   |
| North region (11.0) t/ha      | 96                     | 98   | 93   |

### Group 2 Milling Wheats

The highlights of the Group 2 milling varieties include consistent high yielding qualities that also offer the potential for additional marketing opportunities.

Thanks to the scope of the merchants that the Crops team are in communications with, prices and terms are competitive. By combining these two services, Fram Farmers offers expertise and insight, saving members time at both the seed buying stage, and the marketing stage.

The team has plans to expand this offering to other crops in the future, including specialist, niche crops such as linseed and oats, with the current buyback contracts already proving popular amongst some members.

**For more information on buyback contracts, speak to Jono: 01728 727720 | 07583 037577 | Jonathan.Woollatt@framfarmers.co.uk or visit the Fram Farmers website.**

# ARE THINGS LOOKING POSITIVE AS WE HEAD TOWARDS HARVEST?

As many farms recover from a wet winter and a very dry spring, we bring members an arable update from across the country. In this issue, we hear from two agronomists; Graham Brooks at Prime Agriculture LLP in Essex, and John Hood in Cheshire.



## GRAHAM BROOKS, ESSEX

For the second year running, we are looking at wheat crops that have been drilled over a five-month period on the same farm, which means that often different fields have been at different growth stages and spraying has been a protracted affair.

Having just finished T2s, following the 80 to 100mm of rain in the first three weeks of May, wheat crops generally look well. It has been a struggle to keep up-to-date with the sprayer in recent weeks due to either wind or rain or both. The gap from T1 to T2 has often been either very long or very short, such are the extremes of the year. Cool May temperatures have slowed flag leaf emergence, but new chemistry has allowed us to cover the effect of delayed timing where necessary.

Visible disease levels remain low. With no rain, and very low humidity in April, yellow rust levels dropped massively. We had just started to find new infection on the flag leaf in some varieties as the fungicide was applied. May's rain will have reignited the potential for Septoria, admittedly starting from a fairly low base.

Wheat has finally been able to take up the nitrogen that has been applied. Leaf

testing in field, on the flag, has produced readings that indicate this leaf has 4.5% N levels, which is where we want them to be.

The very wet autumn has given good levels of blackgrass control with residual chemistry. But we can see now that fields that were drilled and then too wet to spray have got significant levels of blackgrass. Oilseed rape has been the problem crop this year, to say the least! Where crops have survived the onslaught of pest, bird and weather, a small thin canopy of pods has been formed which will hopefully produce a harvest of some form.

Spring crops are very variable this year. Soil quality and drilling timing have had a huge effect on establishment. The May rains have helped some of our heavy clay spring seedbeds, and the warm weather means that things will be better than they might originally have looked.

## JOHN HOOD, CHESHIRE

Well, here we are again looking back on another interesting growing season. Here in the Northwest, we did at least manage to see a good proportion of autumn sowing completed in good conditions. Oilseed rape was, yet again, variable in its success with approximately 80% of crops making it through to spring, which is a big improvement on last year's disasters. Winter cereals are also doing well, with the odd area washed out by the extremely wet winter, but on the whole a good autumn.

Spring then arrived with some much-needed dry weather, but with it came the cold, and spring crops were off to a very slow start. Maize went in at the end of April in lovely conditions, and then came

the cold and wet, meaning crops then took nearly five weeks to emerge. This is a fair comparison with crops sown last week which have come up in five days, and may well overtake the early sown ones!

Wheats and barleys look extremely good, with great potential, but with the strong grain prices comes a massive hike in fertiliser price. With crops looking full of promise, it's vital we now keep them going through to harvest, and with huge rust pressure, and temperatures hitting the 30s again this week, a T3 of fungicide plus micro-nutrients is going to be vital to keep the green leaf for as long as possible.

Potatoes have mostly got off to a good start, with some challenges around pre-emergence herbicides struggling in the



dry conditions in mid-April, but most, where the rain came before the crop emerged, the herbicides have done a great job.

Fingers crossed for sunshine and showers through to a glorious dry harvest and autumn.



## YEN WHEAT TRIAL UPDATE FROM MEMBER RYAN GUE

In the previous issue of *Farmers First*, we shared the news that *Fram Farmers* member Ryan Gue is taking part in this year's YEN wheat trials, run by ADAS. Here, Ryan provides us with a progress update on the trial plots after a particularly dry spring...

"It's been an unusual start to the growing season for our winter wheat YEN entry; at the time of writing (Mid-May), the crop of KWS Extase is fast approaching T2 and we have finally received rainfall to help what looked like a very stressed crop. Signs of phosphorus and potassium deficiency were, frustratingly, easily seen in the field from the other side of the farm, which was surprising in a field so close to the dairy herd with good soil indices. It seems that, without soil moisture, these nutrients unfortunately haven't been available to crop roots.

This has been extremely frustrating to see, and it has been difficult to sit on our hands and ignore the temptation of 'magic in a can'. Luckily, now that we've got good soil moisture, the crop is returning to a more pleasing dark green colour. As part of the YEN entry, we take leaf tissue analysis throughout the year, and our most recent findings showed lots of deficiencies. I'm hoping that the next one will be less scary after the rain.

We have decided to try a different approach to our nitrogen planning on our YEN field; as a mixed farm with good amounts of organic manures, it has always been a struggle to quantify how much soil nitrogen to expect to be released to our cereals, and after working out our SMN using RB209 it never seems to change much.

With this in mind we've looked at Hill Court Farm Research who have created a test to replicate Nitrogen release throughout the season. This is done using a 60cm soil sample, which I took in January. The results were very interesting, and recommend that, for our 10t/ha crop (target but not often reality), we only needed to add 120kg/ha of artificial nitrogen, severely down from my planned 190kg/ha.

We have decided to follow the advice for this field, hoping that the leaf and grain analysis in the YEN competition will show us if we have starved the crop of nitrogen. Luckily, the field next door, which has been treated very similarly over the years, is also in Winter Wheat and will receive a farm standard application, so if our reduced N field starts turning yellow we will be able to work out why!"

We will hear further updates from Ryan in the autumn issue of *Farmers First*, out in September.



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# IS YOUR BUSINESS BENEFITTING FROM THE FRAM FUEL CARD SCHEME?

The Fram Farmers Fuel Card Scheme is already bringing benefits to numerous members' farming businesses; 318 members have already signed up to the scheme, with over 1200 cards in use each month.

The scheme is run in association with UK Fuels, giving members access to a wide range of networks including Shell, BP, Esso and UK Fuels which also opens up Tesco, Morrisons and Coop forecourts. The card itself is in a credit card-style format, linked to members' Fram Farmers accounts, and there is a complimentary e-Route mapping tool for all card holders to help plan routes and locate services, available via [www.erouteonline.com/ukfuels](http://www.erouteonline.com/ukfuels) or app store.

## EUROPEAN FUEL CARD

The scheme, which launched in 2019, now provides additional benefits to members; the launch of the European Fuel Card means that any member traveling across Europe can continue to receive cost benefits at over 14,000 fuel stations in 28 countries. Better still, the card comes with no minimum spend or contractual commitment.

## DUAL FUEL CARD

The scheme also now includes a new card, the Dual Fuel Card, allowing members to not only purchase petrol and diesel through

the scheme, but also electrical charges at applicable locations.

The easy-to-use scheme provides numerous benefits to members:

- Cheaper prices at thousands of fuel stations across the UK and Europe
- No need to worry about receipts – all transactions are recorded through members' Fram Farmers accounts.
- Members pay at the end of the following month, aiding cash flow management.

## UNBEATABLE PRICES

The below graph shows the average cost benefits of the Fram Farmers Fuel Card scheme via UK Fuels (blue line), compared to UK Government figures for national average forecourt prices, including supermarkets (black line), and other branded fuel card averages (yellow line). As you can see, the Fram Farmers prices are consistently below the national average.

Members can apply for fuel cards via the Fram Farmers office: 01728 727700.

FIGURE 1: FRAM FARMERS PRICING VS NATIONAL AVERAGE



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## Beet Raiser

A multi-nutrient formulation tailored to the specific needs of sugar beet combining phosphite P with vital nutrients to promote root development, boost plant health and help crops reach their full potential.

### APPLICATION RATES & TIMINGS

Recommended for application at water rates of 200-600 l/ha

#### Sugar Beet

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 4-6 true leaves   | Apply @ 1.5 l/ha to crops showing symptoms of nutrient-related stress.          |
| 6-8 true leaves   | Apply @ 1.5 – 3.0 l/ha to maintain healthy crop establishment.                  |
| 10-16 true leaves | Crops suffering nutrient-related stress will benefit from further applications. |

### MIXING INSTRUCTIONS

Beet Raiser is formulated as a totally water soluble liquid. Beet Raiser should be added to the spray tank first, into a minimum 50% of total water volume followed by the remaining water and any other tank mix partners. Maintain agitation throughout mixing and spraying operations.

Beet Raiser is physically compatible with a wide range of potential tank mix partners. Check compatibility prior to adding to the spray tank.

10Le

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SEARCH ONLINE FOR 'BEET RAISER'

# EXPERT QUALIFIED ADVICE AND SAVINGS ON VETERINARY MEDICINES BILLS

Annual spend on animal medicines can be significant for livestock businesses, so getting it right is crucial. The most expensive medicine is the one that does not work, so it is essential that you get the correct, qualified advice and are purchasing the best medicine for the requirement, based on efficacy, rather than just cost.

With the backing of the Fram Farmers Livestock and Animal Health team, supported by fully qualified Registered Animal Medicines Advisors (RAMAs), also known as R-SQPs, members can benefit from expert advice on the prescription and supply of certain animal medicines, but can also see substantial savings on annual health product spend, with some members seeing on average a 30% saving on inputs every year.

All AMTRA (Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority) qualified RAMAs, including Fram Farmers' Jessica Frost, must pass written exams at Higher Education Level 4 or above, based on a syllabus produced by AMTRA and Harper Adams University. Jessica's colleague Bex White is also currently working to achieving qualified RAMA status.

As an R-SQP/RAMA, Jessica is qualified to advise, prescribe and supply a large variety of animal medicines for both food and non-food animals, covering farm animals, equine, companion animals and avian, including many wormers, vaccines, and tick and flea treatments.

Once qualified, AMTRA RAMAs are required to undertake AMTRA-accredited continuing professional development (CPD) to remain on the RAMA/SQP Register, through a series of courses and webinars through the two-year CPD cycle.

## SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

As the main animal health and livestock specialist and buyer, Jessica has negotiated deals and set up various supplier accounts with veterinary practices in many different parts of the country, from East Anglia to Sussex, Cornwall to Cheshire.

"In the last few years, we have gone through the processes for Fram Farmers to become accredited by the VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate) for supplying POM-VPS products and medicated premixes," explains Jessica.



## POM-VPS MEDICINES AVAILABLE TO BE PRESCRIBED AND SUPPLIED THROUGH FRAM FARMERS RAMAS

- Fly control, such as fly tags, pour-ons and spot-ons for cattle and sheep (and rabbits)
- Wormers such as pour-ons, injectables, and drenches, for cattle, sheep, pigs and horses, (spot-ons and tablets for companion animals – dogs and cats), plus a little for poultry
- Flukicides such as injectables and drenches (for cattle and sheep)
- Some vaccines for cattle, sheep, poultry and pigs
- Flea and tick control (for companion animals)
- Coccidiocides for calves and lambs
- Local anaesthetics for dis-budding
- Iron preparations for piglets
- Mineral replacements for cattle
- Rehydration products for cattle

"This has been achieved by working closely with a veterinary wholesaler, a number of animal health suppliers and also with various manufactures and in-feed mineral/premix suppliers all around the country, both at local level and nationally," she adds.

Jessica and her team also work closely alongside Fram Farmers members' vets, either following a Herd Health Plan set by a vet for VPS medicines, or to request prescriptions for those medicines that can only be prescribed by vets (POM-V or Prescription Only Medicines – Vet).

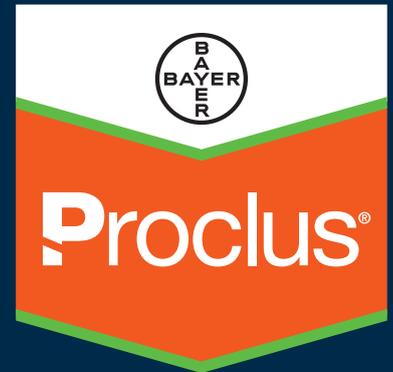
The Livestock team is always looking to evolve and keep up with, or ahead of, current trends and ways of working, with the veterinary industry changing significantly and many vets becoming part of larger corporate groups.

"Although we are keen to support local independent practices where possible, in order to be able to buy at the best prices for our members, we have also forged good relationships with large groups with strong pricing structures," says Jessica. "We are always keen to help our members make savings, and this is demonstrated as veterinary medicines come in the top five product areas in our department, in terms of members' expenditure," she continues.

Jessica and her team are happy to discuss your requirements and see how they are able to help you save money on your animal health inputs to improve profitability.

**Contact Jessica Frost in the Livestock & Animal Health team for more information: 01728 727716  
Jessica.Frost@framfarmers.co.uk**

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# A FOCUS ON IT SYSTEMS IN RURAL BUSINESSES

Modernisation of information technology (IT) is crucial within any agribusiness, and the effect of COVID-19 highlights the need to be able to work and access business data and software anywhere, along with the tools needed to communicate with colleagues, clients and suppliers. Here, we take a closer look at the IT solutions available through Fram Farmers.

Suitable IT systems bring numerous benefits to any business, reducing cost and increasing efficiency by providing accurate, current data. Farm offices are becoming more reliant on IT, not only to manage accounts and farm management software, but also to control state-of-the-art equipment such as robotic milking machines and intelligent feeding systems, or for field monitoring and mapping.

Security and data protection are now also crucial elements of any business IT system, along with dedicated support. Despite this, many IT support providers will not service individual farms as they can be considered 'domestic' due to the relatively small amount of hardware at each site.

"We are receiving a marked increase in enquiries from members who require IT support as their businesses become more data and IT driven," explains Dan Cox, Fram Farmers Business Services & Membership Manager. "Our specialist IT and telecoms supplier recognises this and has the expertise and scope to support members through the cooperative".

Through dedicated supplier relationships, Fram Farmers can provide a wide selection of modern IT solutions including

desktops, laptops, servers, software, managed networking, support, security and cloud services from all leading industry vendors.

## CLOUD-BASED TECHNOLOGY

"Many agri-businesses have already directed their IT focus towards cloud-based technologies, or are looking to do so, and we are seeing an increase in enquiries for this type of support on-farm," adds Dan.

"The Fram team specialises in the seamless migration of existing hardware-based IT systems to cloud-based systems, enabling members to access business data, such as livestock or crop records, or software, from any location or device, providing they have a network or wi-fi connection."

## WHY USE FRAM FOR YOUR ON-FARM IT SYSTEMS?

- Operating throughout the UK
- Partners with more than 30 years of delivering IT services and consultancy
- Proven track records within the agricultural sector
- Highly experienced team of IT professionals
- Fully managed and automated support platform



- Independent open-market sourcing for all leading technology vendors
- Microsoft partner
- Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation
- Product demo and training support

Technology and its associated jargon can often be daunting to members, but the Fram Farmers team has the experience to listen and understand members' technical needs and successfully deliver consultancy, equipment, services and training. This service is also backed up by the Fram Farmers support team, who are on-hand to assist with issues, upgrades, suppliers, and general enquiries.

**For more information, contact the Telecoms team: 01728 727722**  
[telecoms@framfarmers.co.uk](mailto:telecoms@framfarmers.co.uk)

## DON'T FORGET TELECOMS

Being able to communicate effectively and reliably is essential for any agricultural business, but not all businesses are created equal, and neither are the communications solutions that serve them.

The Fram Farmers Telecoms team understands the industry and has a range of experts that will work to find the perfect communications solution for members needs. This doesn't stop at getting members connected – the team ensures great value and protecting businesses for the future.

### REDUCE OPERATIONAL COSTS

Our Telecoms team could be able to help you make significant savings on your monthly communications costs for both mobile phones and office land lines.

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# SPOTLIGHT ON FARM INSURANCE

The past eighteen months have brought a number of additional challenges to rural businesses, some to be expected, and others out of the ordinary. Fram Farmers caught up with Ed Nottingham, Agricultural Director at Scrutton Bland, to ask what this has meant for insurance, and what to look out for now that life is moving back to normal.



Ed Nottingham, Agricultural Director at Scrutton Bland,

## **Firstly, how have things been for the farmers you've been talking to? What have been their main concerns over the last year?**

Of course, the pandemic has been the main topic of conversation, and the first thing that people ask (and genuinely want to know!) is "how are you?", but I have to say that fortunately for most of us in the rural community, the answer is "not too bad". Farming may be an isolated occupation, but for many of us that has been a blessing over the past year.

## **So, what has changed?**

Farming goes on, no matter what the world throws at us. People will always need what we grow and produce, Covid or no Covid. Having said that, lots of clients have seen an increase in demand – take poultry farmers as an example, who have seen a rise in egg sales. Of course, businesses that rely on income from diversification and tourism, such as glamping, B&Bs, shooting and fishing have seen that income dry up during the lockdowns. Hopefully, this summer will allow them to make up for the shortfall, but even so, quite a few of my clients are saying that over the year they don't think it will add up to their normal income.

## **With all the news on the pandemic, are there agricultural issues that would usually have got people talking?**

Undoubtedly! News stories like avian flu have been largely overlooked. This last winter was a bad one for avian flu, and the poultry housing order has only been lifted in the last few weeks. The usual pattern is that a severe winter is usually followed by a milder one, so we're all hoping that this winter will follow that trend.

## **What about longer-term trends?**

One of the things that would have been unheard of twenty years ago (and fairly rare even ten years ago) is having a discussion on succession planning. Farming families are now aware that it needs to be considered. Technological developments mean there aren't jobs for the whole family in the way there used to be, and people are working longer than in previous generations. We'll have to see if the latest news on a £50k grant for older farmers to retire makes a difference!

## **Looking forward, what's your advice for Fram Farmers members this year?**

I'd always advise getting your insurance cover in place before harvest – and give yourself plenty of time to value your assets with the help of your broker and Fram's Machinery team. Modern machinery doesn't depreciate as rapidly as it did years ago, so values will still be high, but so will the cost of parts and repairs. We've also seen increases in the

costs of inputs, and the value of produce and policies need to reflect those. Insurer's settlements are higher at the moment than in previous years, so it pays to take your time and get your valuations right.

## **And what, for you, is the best part of working with Fram Farmers?**

I really enjoy getting out and seeing people, whether that's on my doorstep in south Norfolk or further afield across the country. The past year has meant I've often had to phone (or Zoom!) clients rather than visit them, but people have been happy to interact in different ways. The nice thing is that they're always welcoming – and I wouldn't change that for the world.

**Scrutton Bland are the insurance partner for Fram Farmers. If you'd like to get in touch with Ed, please call 0330 058 6559 or email [hello@scruttonbland.co.uk](mailto:hello@scruttonbland.co.uk).**



Scrutton Bland Group refers to Scrutton Bland LLP, Scrutton Bland Financial Services Limited, Scrutton Bland Insurance Brokers Limited and S Merrick Hill (Commercial) Limited. Scrutton Bland Insurance Brokers Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Our FCA number is 828934.

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